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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

224th Meeting
Tuesday, 28 April 1998, 11 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Draft report of the Committee of the Whole

The Chairman: We are approaching the final stage of the 1998 substantive session. We shall proceed to the adoption of reports of the subsidiary bodies on the various substantive agenda items, and then turn to the consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/1998/CRP.2 to A/CN.10/1998/CRP.6. These documents have been circulated in all languages.

To start the process of the consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I shall call on the Chairman of each Working Group to introduce the report of his Group.

Before calling on the Chairman of Working Group I, however, I wish to introduce the draft report of the Committee of the Whole on the issue of the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission, document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.3, as orally amended. As members can see, this is a brief, self-explanatory statement of facts relating to our consultations and work during this session of the Commission. It was generally accepted by delegations that we should continue these consultations with a view to arriving at recommendations for the General Assembly.

With those very brief remarks, I commend the draft report of the Committee of the Whole, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.3, as orally amended, to the Commission.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of the Committee of the Whole, as contained in A/CN.10/1998/CRP.3, as orally amended.

The draft report, as orally amended, was adopted.

Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the Chairman of Working Group I on agenda item 4, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.4, to introduce the report of the Working Group.

Mr. Aguirre de Cárcer (Spain), Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from Spanish*): The report of Working Group I provides an account of the main elements of the deliberations of the Working Group at this session. I personally should like to emphasize the fact that a wide-ranging discussion took place in the Working Group, which I believe facilitated a more thorough consideration of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. These deliberations helped clarify the positions of delegations from various countries, in particular with regard to the most controversial areas of this issue.

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In this context, I should like to reiterate my gratitude, and that of a number of other delegations, to my predecessor, the Chairman of the Working Group during the previous session, the representative of Algeria, Mr. Mesdoua, who laid down the foundations for this year's work.

Many of our discussions this year were based on the working paper in document A/CN.10/1998/WG.I/WP.1, which was distributed on the first day of our deliberations. As the report indicates, various delegations also submitted working papers, which were added to those that had been submitted last year. In addition, I prepared two informal papers so as to facilitate a well-structured debate on a number of issues.

Before the conclusion of the meetings, I distributed a revised version of working paper 1. This was an attempt on my part to include all of the new elements resulting from our discussion that in my view had received general support, thereby making it possible for us to move towards the consensus that we must reach in order to conclude our work next year.

The preliminary comments of delegations showed that there was a broad range of opinions on revised working paper 1, particularly on the fourth section of the paper, which takes a look at the future prospects for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. I should like to emphasize my personal opinion: when the Working Group meets again, in 1999, for its third and last session on this issue, it should endeavour as early as possible to obtain a broad-based agreement on the approach that should prevail with regard to future prospects, taking into account the fact that the guidelines and recommendations of the Disarmament Commission must be adopted by consensus.

Finally, allow me to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and your colleagues in the delegation of Belarus, for your steadfast support for my efforts as Chairman of Working Group I. I should also like to thank all delegations for their active and constructive participation in the work of the Group, which was the real foundation for any progress that we were able to make this year. I should also like to thank the Secretary of the Working Group, Mr. Alasaniya, for his advice, which was always relevant, and, finally all the interpreters and other conference services staff who helped us in our work.

The Chairman: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on agenda item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.4.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: I would now like to move on to the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.5.

I give the floor to the Chairman of Working Group II to introduce the report of the Working Group.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia), Chairman of Working Group II: In my capacity as Chairman of Working Group II, dealing with agenda item 5, "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", I would like to present to the Commission the report of the Working Group adopted at its last meeting, on Friday, 24 April, which is now contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.5, as well as some amendments which I made during the meeting of the Committee of the Whole today, 28 April 1998.

As members are aware, this was the third year that the item was on the Commission's agenda, and the aim was to achieve consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session. Such an outcome, in accordance with resolution 52/38 F, would lead to the General Assembly's taking decisions regarding the exact date for the special session and organizational matters relating to its convening.

As far as I am concerned, taken together, the 1996, 1997 and current sessions have been a truly rewarding experience in dealing with the multifaceted aspects of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It cannot be denied that we exhaustively considered and covered all aspects of this question in an earnest attempt to reach wider areas of agreement on some of the complex questions. It has had the beneficial effect of clarifying the issues involved, many of which will have to be further refined and reassessed at a future date.

It is evident that there is some distance to go before we achieve consensus. Annexed to the report of the Working Group is a Chairman's paper that, in my view, represents my earnest attempt to bridge the gap in the positions of delegations. It is annexed without prejudice

to the positions of member States and their right to put forward additional proposals on this issue.

In the deliberations of the Working Group, there were differences of view on, among other things, the need to reaffirm the principles and priorities of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament; the proposal to carry out a review of the implementation of the Final Document of the first special session; and questions of a plan or programme of action that have to be addressed at the fourth special session on the strengthening of the role of the United Nations and multilateralism in the field of disarmament and on non-proliferation in all its aspects.

The Working Group did not succeed in bridging these differences. However, in this process, we have come to accord greater appreciation to each other's interests and approaches, ideas and concepts, which has undoubtedly enriched our deliberations and, in turn, laid a solid foundation for any future endeavour. It is now up to member States to decide whether this process of reconciling views should continue and, if so, through what mechanism.

In this connection, I would point out that, by resolution 52/38 F, the General Assembly decided to include the item "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament" in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session. Now, speaking in my capacity as representative of Indonesia, I would like to say that Indonesia believes that it is important that the process of working towards consensus continue.

Work on this item began in 1996 in the Disarmament Commission under the chairmanship of Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia. As Chairman of this Working Group in 1997 and 1998, I feel that we have benefited from the expertise of all members of delegations that have participated in these deliberations for most, if not all, of the three-year period. The building-up of an institutional memory is critical to the ability to move forward on this issue.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations that lent their expertise, their help and their support to our work this year, and I would like in particular to thank, you, Sir, as the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, and all members of the Bureau for their support.

I would also like to thank and express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for his attention and support to the work of the Chair as well as to the work of the Working Group. I would also like to thank all staff of the Secretariat — in particular Mr. Mohammad Sattar and Ms. Carolyn Cooper, who worked closely with the Working Group — the secretarial staff, the conference officers, interpreters and technical staff, whose efforts allowed our work to proceed smoothly.

The Chairman: May I ask the Chairman of Working Group II to read out the amendments to his report, so that they may be reflected in the record?

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia), Chairman of Working Group I: The first amendment I made during the meeting of the Committee of the Whole today was to paragraph 5 of document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.5. In the second line of that paragraph, following the word "Chairman", I would propose that the following phrase be inserted:

> "of Working Group II of the 1997 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, referred to in paragraph 4".

The second amendment I made during the meeting of the Committee of the Whole was to the final paragraph of the annex, on pages 3 and 4 of document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.5. Under sub-heading (b) of that paragraph, all of the lower-case roman numerals in parentheses, from (i) to (xvi), would be deleted.

The Chairman: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II on item 5, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.5, as orally amended.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: We turn now to the report of Working Group III on agenda item 6, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.6.

I give the floor to the Chairman of Working Group III, the Permanent Representative of Uganda, Ambassador Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, to introduce the report of that Working Group.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Chairman of Working Group III: I have the honour to introduce the 1998 report of Working Group III of the Commission, contained in A/CN.10/1998/CRP.6.

The report contains a short technical part, which describes the work accomplished by the Working Group this year. Annexed to the technical part is the Chairman's paper containing the guidelines on practical disarmament measures with a particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

The 1998 Chairman's paper retains the framework of five parts set out in 1997. The Working Group reviewed the first three parts — an introduction, a general framework and principles — but made no substantial amendments to them this year.

The bulk of the work accomplished this year has been in the expansion of the core work of the Working Group, namely, part IV of the Chairman's paper, which is an enumeration of post-conflict practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace. The Working Group spent most of the time available to it reviewing that part. Indeed, in my assessment, good progress was made on defining and clarifying those measures. Of course, further refinement and elaboration of part IV will be necessary next year.

Another expanded part of the Chairman's paper on guidelines was part V, concerning the area of other arms control/limitation and disarmament measures. However, time was too short to hold any substantive discussions on it. This part will need to be reviewed extensively next year.

Working Group III will enter its third and final year of consideration of its agenda item in 1999. The Chairman's paper annexed to the report this year represents the best chance the Working Group will have next year to get a running start, so to speak, and to bring the work to a successful conclusion in a three-week period.

The Chairman's paper is not a consensus text. Therein lies the hurdles that the Working Group must overcome next year.

The Working Group returned again and again this session to the issue of the scope of guidelines, that is, what disarmament and arms control measures will consolidate peace in a post-conflict situation to meet the needs of countries that have experienced the human and material destruction of war, as well as the long-term needs of reconstruction and development of society and the economy. That problem will need to be resolved next year. The Working Group has an opportunity to make a contribution to that effort.

The effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission can be measured, in the first instance, by the political process it generates. The work of Working Group III is the first focused attempt at the international level to bring out guidelines on post-conflict disarmament measures. The process itself is quite good. However, in my view, it will not be enough. The effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission also ought to be measured by the product it produces.

It is my earnest hope that the guidelines will be finalized in 1999. The international community represented here has the cumulative experience and expertise in this area to do so. But even more, I hope that they will serve as a useful checklist to give direction to the efforts of countries emerging from conflict and to the regional and international governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations that are supporting the peace and development processes.

As the Commission is aware, the Secretary-General presented a report to the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. That report applies to many other countries which have experienced conflicts. Three hundred million people are yearning for peace. The construction of durable peace in those countries is the challenge of our time.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the wonderful work you have done, for your support and for the report you have presented to us. I thank my predecessor, the representative of Ireland, whose paper provided the background for this year's work. I thank the delegations that participated in the Working Group for their active contributions and cooperation. I thank the Secretariat, the interpreters, the translators, the conference officers and all the other staff who provided logistical support to the Working Group.

The Chairman: If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group III on agenda item 6, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.6.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: Having adopted all the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I would like most sincerely to thank the Chairmen of the three Working Groups for their dedication. The Commission as a whole is deeply indebted to them for their effective leadership in guiding the deliberations of the Working Groups on the three very complex issues. Thank you again.

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session

The Chairman: We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.2, as orally amended. I have the pleasure of calling on the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Vice Skračić, the representative of Croatia, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia), Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission: It is my honour and distinct pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.2. As in previous years, the draft report consists of four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 1998 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

To begin, in accordance with the oral amendments presented by the representative of Egypt on conference room paper 2, paragraphs 7 and 13 of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission are to be combined. Paragraph 8 shall be amended to read:

> "Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, the Committee of the Whole devoted one meeting for a review of the Disarmament Commission's work, with a view to its revitalization, rationalization and streamlining. The matter was further considered in the course of the Chairman's open-ended consultations."

Furthermore, the following additional countries shall be added to the present paragraph 13, or amended paragraph 7: Chile, Egypt, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom (on behalf of the European Union), the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

As is customary, the final report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part comprises three reports of the Working Groups, as just adopted by the Commission, which are annexed to the present report.

This part is a reflection of the compromises and agreements reached by the delegations during the three weeks of tedious and delicate negotiations. As such, this part is a carefully crafted balance of national security interests of all participants.

I was personally privileged to closely watch this balance being negotiated with a lot of diplomatic skill and patience and a constructive approach. I think that I speak on everybody's behalf when I say that the Disarmament Commission has worked productively this year, and overall good progress was registered in discussions on agenda items 4 and 6: "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N".

Even on agenda item 5 — "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament" — a valiant effort to reach a consensus was undertaken by the Chairman and Member States. Regrettably, the Group was unable to overcome its few remaining differences, which effectively blocked consensus. However, I hope that the General Assembly will pick up this issue and continue the consensus-building process that started at the Disarmament Commission.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that it has been a great honour to serve as Rapporteur under your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, and to participate in the work of the Bureau, together with the Vice-Chairmen and the three Chairmen of the Working Groups, who provided effective and expert guidance to the deliberations of the subsidiary bodies.

Finally, allow me to extend my gratitude to the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind cooperation and assistance, which they provided to the Bureau, to member States in general and to me personally in the preparation of the draft report of the Commission. Let me in particular express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and Mr. Jin Yongjian, Under-

Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and to Mr. Timur Alasaniya, Secretary of the Commission, and his colleagues.

With this brief introduction, I now recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.2.

The Chairman: I thank most sincerely the Rapporteur, the representative of Croatia, for the work and effort he invested in the report of the Disarmament Commission.

We shall now consider the draft report of the Commission chapter by chapter.

If there are no comments on Chapter I, "Introduction", paragraphs 1 and 2, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 were adopted.

The Chairman: We now turn to Chapter II.

If there are no comments on Chapter II, "Organization and work of the 1998 substantive session", paragraphs 3 to 14, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 3 to 14, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Next we turn to Chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 15 to 27. Are there any comments on this chapter?

Mr. Aguirre de Cárcer (Spain) Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from Spanish*): My comments concern paragraph 17, in which reference is made to a single working paper submitted by the Chairman. In line with what appears in the report of Working Group I, paragraph 2 (n), I would like to suggest that we indicate in paragraph 17 that the Chairman submitted two working papers: A/CN.10/1998/WG.I/WP.1 and A/CN.10/1998/WG.I/WP.1/Rev.1.

It might suffice to indicate in paragraph 17 that the Chairman of Working Group I submitted working papers with the same title, and then in parentheses the document number for revision 1 could be added as well.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his suggestion, which means that at the end of the last line of paragraph 17 we are going to add the following words: "and A/CN.10/1998/WG.I/WP.1/Rev.1".

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Following up on the proposal just made by the representative of Spain regarding paragraph 17, I think it would be much more convenient and appropriate to begin the sentence with "Two working papers", because it is a question of a working paper and a revision of it. So it seems to me there are two working papers, the first submitted as Working Paper 1 and another document — the revision — that was submitted subsequently. Thus, to recognize the work of our Chairman, we should note that there are two working papers and we should start the paragraph with those words, "Two working papers".

The Chairman: I thank the delegation of Algeria for its proposal. I hope it is acceptable to the Chairman of the Working Group as it is reflective of the actual number of papers. So paragraph 17 will now read, "Two working papers entitled" and then on from there.

If there are no further comments on this chapter, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt chapter III, paragraphs 15 to 27, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 15 to 27, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: We turn now to chapter IV, "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 28 to 33, which will contain the reports of the subsidiary bodies which we adopted a moment ago.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt chapter IV, paragraphs 28 to 33.

Paragraphs 28 to 33 were adopted.

The Chairman: Having adopted all paragraphs of the draft report, the Commission will now take up the draft report of the Disarmament Commission as a whole, with all reports of the subsidiary bodies inserted therein.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to adopt the draft report of the Commission as a whole, as contained in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.2, as orally amended?

The draft report, as orally amended, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Ms. Robertson (Australia): Instead of having participated in the general exchange of views at the beginning of this session, I will now make a concluding statement on behalf of the Australian delegation.

Once again, the results of the 1998 session have been mixed, and, in our view, rather disappointing — unnecessarily so. In particular, Australia extends its appreciation — "sympathy" might be a better word — and pays tribute to the Chairman of Working Group II, on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. As the Australian delegation stated in the Working Group, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat has over the last two years made strenuous and far-reaching efforts to accommodate the differing views of interested delegations. Australia followed the debates attentively, and we considered that the Chairman's paper, when read as a whole, captured an appropriate balance.

Australia was never one of those countries calling for a fourth special session on disarmament. However, the General Assembly agreed unanimously last year that one could be held, responding to the wishes of a large majority of the membership. It is plain to see that a very small number of delegations blocked the Chairman's efforts to find consensus on the objectives and agenda of a special session. We were puzzled that some delegations were trying to curtail the content and outcome of the special session before it even took place. For three years we listened to arguments that really should have been reserved for the special session itself.

As the Australian delegation said, the membership of the General Assembly being what it is, no one can seriously doubt that a special session would give due and updated attention to nuclear disarmament, and that, given developments over the last 20 years, it would also have new things to say on the other weapons of mass destruction and on conventional weapons. This is a reality that cannot be avoided by obsessive and rigid adherence to the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) or to particular national positions at this stage of the process.

The Final Document of the first special session is a valuable and historic document. So, doubtless, was the final document of the Congress of Vienna. These things are products of their time. Time also reveals errors and inadequacies of both commission and omission. Much of what was thought and concluded at SSOD I remains valid today. Some parts of it are timeless, some sadly dated. It does the cause of global arms control no service to invest this 20-year-old document with the status of immutable holy writ.

The failure to agree even on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session casts the Disarmament Commission into disrepute and ridicules the very objective which some delegations have been relentlessly pursuing: that is, to strengthen the role of multilateralism in disarmament.

On a more positive note, Australia considers that Working Group I, on nuclear-weapon-free zones, had an intensive and lively exchange on a range of issues pertinent to that topic. We would like to pay tribute to the Chairman, Mr. Miguel Aguirre de Cácer, for his inexhaustible and imaginative efforts in so ably guiding the Group in its deliberations. We think that his two working papers — particularly this year's, which, even though we were not allowed to say so, builds on last year's and is the logical starting point for next year — along with the contributions of other delegations in the form of working papers will provide a solid basis for the Working Group's final year of work.

We have heard a number of viewpoints over the past three weeks on what the goal of Working Group I should be: whether it should attempt to produce general guidelines and principles on the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones or whether it should offer concrete recommendations on specific new zones, taking into account the various initiatives which are currently under way in a number of regions, and whether it should undertake an assessment of the viability and effectiveness of existing zones. If we set too ambitious a goal for ourselves, we will not reach consensus next year. My delegation supports the formulation of general principles and guidelines, with due factual attention given to the various regional initiatives. We sincerely hope that Working Group I will reach a successful conclusion in 1999.

Working Group III has also made steady progress. Given the relative unfamiliarity of some of the issues and the residual uncertainty about the scope of the Working Group's mandate, it was not easy for the Working Group to come to grips with the development of texts. Thanks to the dedicated work of the Chairman, Ambassador Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, and his Secretariat

support, as well the contributions of delegations, we have amplified those chapters of the draft guidelines that needed to be fleshed out. The whole product will need further discussion next year, given the limited time that was available. We urge delegations to study the Chairman's paper carefully, so that negotiations can get under way expeditiously at next year's session.

Also at this session, and as requested by the General Assembly, the Commission had quite a constructive discussion on ways to reform the Commission's working methods and work programme so that it can more effectively fulfil its role. Australia wishes to express its appreciation to the Chairman for conducting this discussion and follow-up consultations. We found that there was some convergence of views on this subject, and that it should be further reviewed in the future. We regret that it was not possible to go further in the Commission's report. We think that there is a practical contradiction between seeking to extend the terms of working-group Chairmen and at the same time keeping items on the agenda for three years.

The key message we will take from this year's session is that the task of reform and renewal of the Disarmament Commission must go on if the credibility and viability of the institution are to be preserved.

Mr. Chairman, the Australian delegation expresses its warm appreciation for the efforts you have made and for the skill with which you have conducted the work of this session.

We would finally like to thank the Secretariat, including the conference officers, translators and interpreters, for their assistance.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): As this session of the Disarmament Commission comes to an end, the Chinese delegation wishes to make a few remarks. This session received considerable attention from all participants, especially because it marked the final session at which we would consider the item on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Although the item has been under consideration in the Commission for three years, no agreement has been reached on the objectives and agenda of the special session.

This cannot but be a matter of regret, indicating deep differences on a series of fundamental issues in the field of international disarmament. Despite this, through full and in-depth discussions the parties have deepened their understanding of each other's thinking and ideas. In this sense, the work in the Disarmament Commission over three years has not been in vain. The delegation of China sincerely hopes that even though it may be difficult for the parties to reach consensus on the major strategic issues in the field of international disarmament, we may still continue our reflection and exploration and make progress through joint efforts on some of the specific issues that the parties have identified.

In this regard, the delegation of China would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the Chairman of the Working Group on this agenda item, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia, for his tireless efforts in search of consensus and for the skill he has displayed in this connection.

This is the second year in which the Commission has reviewed the other two agenda items, on nuclear-weapon-free zones and on certain aspects of conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament. Deliberations on these items built upon our work in the past and laid the groundwork for the future, thereby attracting the attention of all delegations. Under the able stewardship of the Chairmen of the Working Groups on those two items, Mr. Aguirre de Cárcer of Spain and Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, and with the active participation of delegations and their in-depth discussions, progress has been made on the two agenda items, preparing further for the completion of deliberations and for next year's review. The delegation of China would like to thank the two Chairmen for their contributions.

The delegation of China would also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your personal effort in search of progress at this session. The Committee of the Whole, under your guidance and in relevant consultations with the parties concerned, conducted a useful discussion on improving the work of the Commission. We hope that on this basis the parties will reach an early consensus so that the Disarmament Commission can more fully play its role as a mechanism for disarmament.

Finally, the delegation of China would like to thank the other members of the Bureau and the advisers and secretaries of the Commission and of the Working Groups, as well as the interpreters, translators and other Secretariat staff, for their hard work and excellent service. We should also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jin Yongjian and Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for the interest they have expressed in the session and for the assistance that they have provided.

Mr. Snell (Canada): My delegation wishes to begin by commending you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, for the efforts you have all made to move our work forward. We believe that there have been numerous expressions of a desire to compromise where differences in position exist and, indeed, some genuine demonstration of such effort. For the two Working Groups destined to continue their work next year, we hope that this effort will, indeed, bear fruit.

With regard to the Working Group mandated to seek out consensus on the objectives and agenda of a future special session on disarmament, we can only applaud the tireless efforts of the Chairman, our colleague from Indonesia. My delegation has already had the opportunity to comment, in the Working Group itself, that we believed that the Chairman's paper of 22 April had the best potential, of all the documentation we had seen, to attract consensus. We, and many others, were prepared to join in a consensus on that paper, recognizing that it was not perfect and did not perfectly reflect our national views. Nevertheless, it did, in our view, fall within the realm of the acceptable; and, again in our view, it did not jeopardize the position of any delegation prior to the special session. We regret that this opportunity has been lost. We would simply recall that ours was a mandate to find consensus, not to embark upon exercises that drive us farther apart as we each attempt to put the best gloss possible on our respective arguments.

We have said in the past, and we continue to say, that these efforts in the Disarmament Commission can succeed only to the extent that we, collectively, are willing to consider new perspectives in the search for common ground, and not remain content with mere statements of immovable national positions. This experience strengthens our belief that the disarmament machinery is in need of reform and that we do damage to it and to our goals by merely putting off the difficult decisions on reform to some time in the indefinite future.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): As our session is coming to an end allow me, Mr. Chairman, to say how very much we appreciate the way that you have conducted our work. Your broad experience, qualities and expertise on disarmament matters have often provided valuable guidance and enlightenment, making progress possible.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to say how much we appreciate the particular attention that Mr. Dhanapala has given to the work of this Commission and of the Working Group.

With regard to the rationalization of our consultations that you, Mr. Chairman, conducted on this question, and with regard to the fourth special session devoted to disarmament, the results did not live up to our expectations. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that the Disarmament Commission is a body that allows us, year after year, to build up and deepen our consideration of some very delicate, complex matters that inevitably give rise to some difficulties and differences of opinion.

We had intensive discussions in the three Working Groups. Our meetings were not always easy, because States' positions were often far apart. With regard to Working Group I, on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at, and to Working Group III, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation, my delegation feels that we made progress in our consideration of these items.

The results obtained this year under the wise guidance of the representatives of Uganda and Spain will certainly help towards the positive conclusion of these items next year. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Ambassador of Uganda and the representative of Spain for their tireless efforts over the course of these three weeks and their positive contributions to the work of these Working Groups.

Turning to Working Group II on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, my delegation regrets that no agreement was reached and that the Working Group did not manage to achieve consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session, despite the many efforts made by the representative of Indonesia. My delegation pays tribute to him for his patient and devoted chairmanship of the Working Group.

Finally, I thank the members of the Secretariat for their devotion and contributions to the work of the Commission.

Mr. Zahran (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to extend our congratulations to you, Sir, on your prudent chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. I also wish to thank the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, who have striven tirelessly to achieve the success of the Commission's

work on the three substantive items on its agenda: "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned"; "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament"; and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N".

With regard to item 4, we believe that the work of Working Group I must not be confined to the preparation of guidelines alone. It must have a forward-looking approach in order to address those regions where there are real initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly those regions where a consensus exists among the States of the region to establish such a zone or at least to seek to establish it. We hope that the Working Group will take this objective into consideration at the next session of the Disarmament Commission.

Concerning the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we, like preceding speakers, regret that Working Group II was unable to achieve a consensus on the agenda and objectives of the fourth special session. We hope that in the future, after this subject is no longer being discussed within the Disarmament Commission, further efforts will be made in other forums to find agreement on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session and its earliest possible convening.

With regard to Working Groups III and I, the efforts and papers of both Chairmen must be reflected in the Disarmament Commission's work next session. The Chairmen's papers and the other papers that have been presented by delegations and groups of States will be very useful in ensuring the positive outcome of the work of both Working Groups at that session.

In conclusion, I thank you, Sir, and the members of the Secretariat.

Mr. Varma (India): My delegation has requested the floor to convey its appreciation for your efforts, Sir, as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session. We congratulate you on the skill with which you have steered our proceedings. We would also wish to commend the Chairmen of the three Working Groups for their diligent efforts. The smooth functioning of our work was facilitated by the valuable support of the Secretariat.

We deeply appreciate the contribution of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala. We thank him for his guidance and advice.

We have before us reports of the three Working Groups, two of which, on agenda items 4 and 6, will be considered by this Commission at its next substantive session. We can draw satisfaction from the results insofar as our deliberations on these two agenda items have resulted in a greater understanding of the concepts involved and the positions of member States on the issues at hand. We believe that this can provide a useful basis on which the Disarmament Commission could carry forward its work on these agenda items next year.

Our deliberations on agenda item 5 on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) had the benefit of resolution 52/38 F, adopted without a vote earlier at this session of the General Assembly. Our delegation shared the widespread expectation that the spirit of deliberations at this session of the Commission would match the spirit of accommodation that led to the adoption of that resolution by the General Assembly without a vote. It is therefore with disappointment that this delegation notes from the report of the Working Group on agenda item 5 that it was not possible, despite arduous efforts, to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

India is committed to the convening of SSOD IV on the basis of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. We lent our active support to this proposal in the General Assembly, at previous sessions of the Disarmament Commission as well in the Non-Aligned Movement. We recall that it was the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting in Cairo in 1994 which called for a special session on disarmament, a call reiterated in subsequent non-aligned summit and ministerial declarations.

Our approach, set out in detail in our plenary statement before this Commission on 8 April, was aimed at exploring every possible avenue that would contribute to bridging the gap in the positions of member States. We believe that an SSOD IV would be best placed to take advantage of the positive changes in the international climate in the post-cold-war period if it were to draw the appropriate lessons from the past and preserve and build upon the achievements of the first special session on disarmament.

A reference was made today to the Congress of Vienna. We would like to recall that that Congress resulted in the longest period of peace that the continent of Europe has ever known.

Our deliberations have shown that there are differences in the positions of delegations on the status of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament. We have noted that some member States have sought to use the deliberations on SSOD IV to question the relevance and validity of the Final Document of SSOD I, which remains the only consensus document of the international community on disarmament. This delegation finds it difficult to agree with this approach and would like to reaffirm its commitment to the principles and priorities contained in the Final Document of SSOD I. An essential objective of SSOD IV would be a review and assessment of the implementation of the programme of action contained in the Final Document of SSOD I, especially on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament, so that the international community could decide on the concrete steps that need to be taken for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

While consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV remains elusive for the time being, we need to take stock of the situation and find ways to enable further consideration of this proposal. We remain committed to participating actively in this process.

Mr. Basit (Pakistan): Mr. Chairman, my delegation sincerely appreciates your efforts and skills in steering the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Pakistan fully subscribes to the goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It was back in 1974 that we presented a proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. We sincerely hope that the Commission will be able to finalize the general guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones next year.

As regards the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), we also regret that the member States have not been able to reach consensus. For us, SSOD IV is of the utmost importance and we sincerely hope that an appropriate way will be found to convene SSOD IV at an early date.

As regards the item on conventional weapons, our delegation looks forward to next year's proceedings, and we will continue to play our constructive and positive role, with a view to evolving effective principles and guidelines in this regard.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Cuban delegation, I would first like sincerely to congratulate you and the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, as well as the Secretariat, for the magnificent efforts made during this session of the Disarmament Commission, which ends today.

The Cuban delegation is pleased to note the progress made in deliberations on the item on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we hope that consideration of that item will be concluded at the next session of our Commission in a way that is satisfactory to all delegations. The Cuban delegation will continue to support efforts that contribute to constructive discussion of this item, to which we attach great importance.

Cuba deeply regrets than the necessary consensus has not been reached with regard to the objectives and the agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We wish to reiterate the importance of holding another special session of the General Assembly on this topic and of its duly taking into account the Final Document adopted in 1978. We sincerely hope that the General Assembly will continue the work of the Commission in this regard at its next session, thereby fulfilling the expectations of the international community to hold a new special session devoted to disarmament that will outline future directions.

With regard to Working Group III on agenda item 6, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", the Cuban delegation believes the item will require painstaking work in 1998 if we really wish to reach a consensus on it. The deliberations in Working Group III this year demonstrated that there are still considerable differences among delegations, including with regard to issues related to the mandate given to this Working Group. I should like to take this opportunity to state clearly for the record that, as indicated in the report of Working Group III, the Chairman's paper annexed to it does not prejudge the position of any delegation on this item.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to you for your leadership of this session of the Disarmament Commission; to Under-Secretary-General

Dhanapala for his attention to the work of the Disarmament Commission; and to the Chairmen of the Working Groups and the Secretariat for their valuable efforts.

The experiences gained during recent years in the work of the Disarmament Commission have proved that the Commission can successfully fulfil its work if its deliberations are conducted in a cooperative and harmonious manner and if all sides show flexibility in decisions. Two years ago, this body was able to adopt a set of guidelines and recommendations on transfers of and illicit traffic in conventional arms. This achievement would not have been attainable if all sides had not shown their flexibility, in particular those countries which rely on conventional weapons for their security. Our hope was that the spirit of cooperation shown on that issue would be carried over to our efforts regarding other disarmament matters.

As far as the work of Working Group II is concerned, I should say that the question of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was under consideration for the third and final year in the Disarmament Commission. We expected all members of the Commission to show their full cooperation and flexibility so that the Commission could reach consensus. Regrettably, consensus eluded us because some States that rely on nuclear weapons for their security strongly maintained their opposition to any proper reference to the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as well as to the principles and priorities stated therein.

This year Working Group I achieved some progress. However, to reach a successful result, during deliberations on formulating the guidelines and recommendations, two principal ideas should be taken into account: the responsibility of extraregional countries to encourage and facilitate the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, and the need to have clear and concrete recommendations on the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones. My delegation sincerely hopes that this Working Group will be able to finalize its work next year.

Mr. Londoño-Paredes (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia is speaking to thank you, Sir, for your good offices in directing the work of this session. We know that there are some positions on which we are far from reaching an agreement, but this does not mean that there has been a lack of will to work. When an attempt is made to reach consensus, such will is essential. And it was obvious that the various deliberations of the Working Group were always vigorous. Now the same impetus shown by the delegations in stating their positions must be transformed yet further, not only into the will to work, but also into an atmosphere in which we can achieve consensus, which is the final aim of all.

Briefly, on behalf of my delegation and Ambassador Andelfo García, who is not in New York, I would like to thank the team, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the three Chairmen of the Working Groups and all others present here, for the achievements that have been made.

The Chairman: If no other delegations wish to make comments at this point, this concludes our stage of concluding remarks.

Other business

The Chairman: If there is no other business that the Commission members would like to take up now, we can consider agenda item 8 concluded.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: By way of a final note, as the Chairman of the Commission at this substantive session, I would like to say that we had before us several items for consideration, and all of them were important issues bearing directly on disarmament and the security of our nations, as well as on conceptual approaches to attaining these goals.

On nuclear-weapon-free zones and practical measures for conventional disarmament, I trust the Working Groups deliberated, built up and enlarged some fundamental areas of understanding, as was appropriate during the second year of consideration. These efforts will be very useful for the final round of drafting recommendations and guidelines next year, and, indeed, all of us are looking forward to that stage.

On streamlining the Disarmament Commission procedures, I believe we had a very meaningful exchange of views. Certain areas emerged as possible areas of agreement, and we agreed earlier today to continue consultations in this regard. The Permanent Representative of Belarus, Ambassador Sychou, will be available as a contact point for those delegations that wish to continue with those consultations in my absence.

On the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, although a full and

total agreement on the objectives and agenda escaped us, I believe the Disarmament Commission made big strides in expanding areas of convergence of minds, which augurs well in turn for the possible consideration of this issue by the General Assembly this fall.

We are approaching the new millennium — and this is not a matter of arithmetic only. I believe the paradigm of international relations, especially in areas of disarmament and security, is now changing. Therefore, in my view, it is natural that we as a community of nations need time to ascertain how best to approach and achieve these overridingly important goals — those of disarmament and security. I am sure that all delegations and all nations will continue to exert further efforts towards these ends.

I take heart from the fact that, in the course of this session and in the course of my consultations, all the delegations confirmed that the Disarmament Commission continues to play a unique role as the only universal membership body for in-depth consideration of disarmament issues. I believe that this is the *raison d'être* of the Disarmament Commission, and the concluding statements we have just heard continue to uphold this most important part of our work.

At this final stage, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Disarmament Commission's Bureau for their diehard support of the issues and work of the Commission. I think we all owe special thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Mr. Jin Yongjian, for the steadfast support the Commission and I, as the Chairman, received from them throughout the session. We are also specially indebted to Mr. Timur Alasaniya, the Secretary of the Commission, for all the hard work he has invested in our proceedings.

I would also like on behalf of the Commission to thank most sincerely and profoundly all the staff members of the Disarmament and Decolonization Organs Servicing Branch of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and also the interpreters who had to bear with our different languages and the conference officers and documents officers for their contributions to our work.

My personal thanks to all of the old and new friends I have here in New York, and my very special thanks to all of the delegations for their important support of my obligations as the Chairman. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with all of you. Thank you.

Closure of the session

The Chairman: This concludes our substantive business for the year 1998. I declare closed the 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.